B1095

A Woman Doctor in the Land of Morning Calm

By Frances J. Baker

A Sketch of

DR. ROSETTA SHERWOOD HALL

Price, Two Cents

Woman's Foreign Missionary Society
Methodist Episcopal Church
36 Bromfield Street, Boston, Mass.

A Woman Doctor in the Land of Morning Calm

A Sketch of Dr. Rosetta Sherwood Hall

Young Woman's Series, No. 3

IN all the world-wide mission field there is no gauge for measuring the progress of gospel missions in Pyeng Yang, north Korea, except Uganda. Eight years after the first missionaries stood on the heights of the walled city of seventy or eighty thousand people, and blew the gospel trumpet, a message came from under the sea: "Seven hundred at a mid-week prayer meeting on a rainy night."

The beginning of missionary interest among the Koreans may be said to have commenced with the coming of the first Korean embassy to Washington, in 1883. Two years later Methodism sent out her vanguard. Affairs were in an unsettled state and at times civil war seemed imminent. Just after the opening of certain ports, the Queen was cruelly murdered. The social customs of the people likewise presented a group of obstacles, especially the severe code of seclusion surrounding the women, which is most binding on the high class.

Not only must the social position of women be altered for the better, but there were other commotions to be introduced into this Land of Morning Calm. There was no Bible, no dictionary, no grammar, not even a leaflet to put into the hands of the people. It was "the nick of time to create a Christian literature. What Luther did for the German language, Christian missions are doing for

the Korean, and in the same way, by casting aside hide-bound Chinese forms and clothing the Bible in the Korean tongue. Korea is at the stage where England was in the days of Wycliffe. All the modern school-books may easily be Christian."

In 1890 Dr. Rosetta Sherwood was sent by the Methodist Woman's Foreign Missionary Society to take up the work laid down by Dr. Metta Howard, the first woman physician to Korea. After her graduation from the Woman's Medical College in Philadelphia, she engaged in mission work in New York under the superintendency of Dr. James Hall, whom she afterwards married in Korea. It was through no fault of Dr. Hall's that the marriage was not consummated in the home land. But the destiny that shaped their ends sent them to Korea within a year of each other, and after six months they were happily married, in 1892, and went to China on their wedding trip. When they returned they at once created an ideal home in Seoul, but were soon temporarily parted by the powers that be, he to open up work in the wicked city of Pyeng Yang, one hundred and eighty miles distant, she to continue in charge of the Woman's Hospital, the first in Korea. This sacrifice for the Master's work was borne bravely by both for His sake.

In the first school for girls founded in Seoul by Mrs. M. F. Scranton of the same Society, despite the Korean saying "What's the use of sending a girl to school? A girl is no good, except to get married and sew and work for her lord and master," —in that school was a girl called Chyon Tong. She was converted in her own room, then invited the other girls to come and pray for clean hearts, and this was the origin of woman's prayer meetings in Korea. Dr. Sherwood was obliged to enter upon

her profession immediately upon her arrival, and Chyon Tong, understanding English better than any one else, was sent to the hospital to interpret for her. The doctor in turn taught her physiology and later materia medica, while each day she received practical lessons in compounding drugs and caring for the sick. She was baptized with the name of "Esther." When she was sixteen years old she had to conform to the universal custom and be married, and unless her Christian friends found her a husband, her family would, and that meant a heathen. Her friends looked around and decided upon a Mr. Pak, a Christian convert. The couple did not see each other until the wedding day, when they were married by a Christian ceremony. Esther Pak, whose name is now so familiar, continued her medical training.

Dr. Sherwood was from the first most intensely devoted to her chosen profession, but at the same time always intent to improve every opportunity to present the Gospel to her patients, visiting them after their discharge from the hospital, teaching them in their homes and doing her best to keep in touch with them and to influence them. She tried to make her own wants and requirements as few and as simple as possible, so as to be able to devote the more time to her work among the women for whom it was her delight to labor. In 1893 she began work in Chemulpo, the first work among women outside of Seoul. The success was such that whole families were won to Christ.

In May, 1894, Dr. Hall took Mrs. Hall and their little boy, Sherwood—about six months old—with him to Pyeng Yang for the first time, in the hope that the presence and sight of an American woman and little child would, in view of their great curiosity and love for little children, help to overcome the

prejudice of the people against the foreigners and win their friendship. On the way by steamer they encountered a typhoon and were obliged to anchor for thirty-three hours. They were accompanied by Mr. Pak and Esther, his wife, as helpers. On their arrival they were met by the native Christians and Mrs. Hall agreed to "receive" the following day. Bravely she allowed hundreds of curious women and children to come in to see herself, the second white woman ever in that city, and her baby, the first foreign white baby. "Strange foreign child," they said, "with gray hair like an old person." Mrs. Hall says "the people seemed friendly and I liked them."

The following day, instigated by the officers, persecution began. Native Christians were cast into prison, with their feet made fast in the stocks. In the evening "Mr. Pak was beaten in sight of us all," says Mrs. Hall, "by the Captain of the district, and later, a stone that was directed against me as I stood in front of our open window, fell, crushing a jar just beneath the window." Dr. Hall wired Seoul, and the British consul general and the American minister commanded protection at once, according to treaty, and the release of the prisoners. Oriental delay was interjected, but their efforts were finally successful. The news touched all Christian hearts and the missionaries of all denominations in Seoul gathered for prayer in behalf of these loved ones. It is a significant fact that the same hour Dr. Hall wired, "All released." The Presbyterian missionaries, Moffett and McKenzie, travelled day and night as a relief party and reached them in four days, and a week later the Methodist superintendent, Dr. Scranton, arrived. After thirty-six hours in prison, threatened many times with death, all were sent for by the magistrate,

beaten and discharged, but stoned all the way home. But religious toleration was won.

The Halls remained a month, treating patients daily and holding religious services Sundays and every night. The interest in Christianity was deepening, when there came an order from the American consul to come to an open port. They took the last steamer before the war. It was filled with soldiers, and on reaching Chemulpo they found the harbor crowded with men of war. The China-Japan war was on. Pyeng Yang became a great battle-field. That fall, after an illness of a few days, Dr. Hall died, a victim to the dreaded typhus fever which he contracted while trying to relieve the suffering of the people caused by war. Mrs. Hall with her little boy and a sweet, sad memory as a constant companion, decided to return to the home of her parents for a while. She took with her Esther Kim Pak and her husband, with the purpose of educating Esther as a physician to return to work among her own people. Dr. Pak took her degree in Baltimore, the first Korean woman to take up the study of medicine, and returned, in 1899, to meet the expectation of friends, giving valuable assistance and in the first ten months treating nearly 3,000 cases.

In the fall of 1897, Dr. Hall returned to Korea with her two children, Sherwood and Edith Margaret. She spent the winter in Seoul helping Dr. Cutler in the medical work and adapting the "New York Point" system for the blind to the Korean alphabet, with a view to doing something for the many blind in Korea. In the spring of 1898, she went again to Pyeng Yang, gladly going to work among the very people for whom her husband had laid down his life. She had first to pass through a baptism of great sorrow, as in 1894 they had to go

through severe persecution. Scarcely had she reached there when her little daughter was taken sick and was soon transplanted to the heavenly home,—Edith whom God had lent to the bereaved widow for three short years. She sleeps besides her father on the banks of the beautiful Han river near Seoul.

During the first year after her return to Pyeng Yang, Dr. Hall selected a blind Korean girl and taught her the adapted "New York Point," with a view to training her to teach other blind children. Blind girls in Korea are looked upon as a kind of sorceress, and their misfortune is used to darken not only their own minds but those of others. This work for the blind has been continued by Dr. Hall, and her girls are making progress in reading and writing, in book-making, and in industrial training and massage treatment.

Friends had taken the hospital fund raised by Dr. James Hall, and added to it and built a memorial hospital, with a woman's ward and a comfortable home, all under one roof. Dr. Rosetta Hall again took up her dispensary work, and being summoned to the Governor's to treat his wife, whom she relieved soon, the Governor expressed his gratitude by a present of one hundred eggs and three spring chickens. A little later, when asked to name the medical plant, he gladly sent "Woman's Dispensary of Extended Grace," —a marked contrast to the treatment of the former Governor, who favored the persecution in 1894.

With Edith's small savings together with the proceeds of her store of goods as a nucleus, Dr. Hall commenced building some children's wards. Friends at home aided in this beautiful memorial until she had nearly $500. All the material had to be prepared by hand. There is nothing like it in

the city, with its two stories, brick chimney, galvanized iron roof, and side boarded and painted,—a serious undertaking for a carpenter, who had never seen such a building. On the anniversary of Edith's birthday, the mother joyfully gathered in a few little Korean girls for a birthday treat. This building will form a wing of the woman's hospital soon to be built.

Dr. Hall makes country trips and holds training classes that prove very helpful to the women. At an Easter service, Sherwood passed his cap and took up the first "collection" ever taken in the place—131 Pyeng Yang cash, or 26 sen, an average of one sen apiece for those present. A native evangelist who was present, told the people about the first collection Sherwood's father took in Pyeng Yang, which, though less than this, was to enable them in time to build their own church, and he suggested that this money be used as the nucleus of a fund for a church building in Nampo.

It might be supposed that the Russo-Japan war would have completely disrupted missionary work, and early in 1904 it did look to some of the missionaries as if they would be compelled to leave Pyeng Yang, and perhaps Korea, as the heavy firing was heard on the other side of the Yalu. The King's palace in Seoul, when burned, was almost directly in front of the Methodist Compound, and for a few hours there was great anxiety, as the sparks were flying in all directions. But through it all, even in Pyeng Yang, the war has interfered with missionary work but slightly. In some degree it has probably helped by turning the minds of the people, as in other war days, away from all human reliance, toward God.

P. R. WARREN CO., PRINTERS, BOSTON. 4928